

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-05

NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

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R 151550Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4730

INFO AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 14194

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, MT

SUBJECT: UK POLICY TOWARD MALTA

REF: VALLETTA 977

1. WE CALLED ON SUSAN JAMES, FCO DESK OFFICER FOR MALTA, SEPTEMBER 11 TO ASK IF HMG THINKING ON MALTA HAD EVOLVED SINCE AMBASSADOR SMITH'S DISCUSSIONS AT FCO IN JULY AND INQUIRE ABOUT STATUS OF BRITISH STUDY ON LONG-RANGE UK OBJECTIVES WITH REGARD TO MALTA.

2. IT WAS CLEAR IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION THAT SUMMER HOLIDAYS AND MORE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS ON SOUTHERN FLANK HAVE SLOWED SUBSTANTIALLY COMPREHENSIVE BRITISH ASSESSMENT OF MALTA. MODEST RESOURCES OF SOUTHERN EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT HAVE BEEN CONCENTRATED ON PERPETUAL CRISIS IN PORTUGAL AND DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO CYPRUS AND CONSIDERATION OF CONTINGENCIES CONCERNING MALTA HAS NOT BEEN GIVEN PRIORITY.

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3. MOREOVER, ACCORDING TO JAMES, FCO IS SOMEWHAT RESERV-

ED AT THE MOMENT ON VALUE OF ANALYZING LONG-TERM UK OBJECTIVES IN MALTA BECAUSE OF IMPONDERABLES ASSOCIATED WITH THAT ANALYSIS. IN DISCUSSING UNCERTAINTIES WHICH COULD INVALIDATE CONCLUSIONS REACHED ANY TIME SOON, SHE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY THE ANTICIPATED SPRING 1976 ELECTION IN MALTA; THE IMPACT OF EVENTS IN THE REST OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ON MALTA'S STRATEGIC VALUE; THE STATE OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN THE LATE 70'S; AND MALTA'S SUCCESS, OR LACK THEREOF, AT PRYING MONEY OUT OF THE ARAB WORLD, ESPECIALLY LIBYA.

4. NEVERTHELESS, JAMES SAID SOUTHERN EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT IS NOW ENGAGED IN THE STUDY MENTIONED BY BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER REFTEL. EFFORT, HOWEVER, IS AT AN EARLY STAGE AND OCTOBER DEADLINE SOMEWHAT OPTIMISTIC.

5. COMMENT: FCO IS NOT PARTICULARLY SEIZED WITH PROBLEMS OF MALTA AND WILL REQUIRE PERIODIC GENTLE PUSHES FROM US TO FOCUS ON CONTINGENCIES THEY SEE AS SEVERAL YEARS AWAY. PENTAGON STUDY ON WHAT MALTA MEANS TO THE WEST (REFTEL) WOULD PROVIDE USEFUL PROD TO UK THINKING ON THIS SUBJECT. IN ANY EVENT, WE MUST EXPECT TO TAKE THE LEAD. BRITISH WILL LISTEN WITH INTEREST AND SYMPATHY TO ANY PROPOSALS WE MIGHT MAKE, AND WILL WANT TO CONSULT CLOSELY WITH US AS EVENTS EVOLVE. BUT THEY CLEARLY BELIEVE THAT IN MAKING DECISION TO WITHDRAW, THEY PASSED THE MALTESE BATON TO NATO AND THE U.S.

RICHARDSON

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